

Bitou Bush Battle

Port Kembla Coal Terminal has declared war on Bitou Bush, winning praise from Wollongong City Council for its efforts to rid the site of this noxious weed.

Bitou Bush is a native of South Africa, and has become a major problem along the NSW coast after being used to stabilise sand dunes after sand mining.

This practice was discontinued in the early 1970s, but by then it was too late. Bitou Bush had taken over vast tracks of coastal land, choking out native vegetation and destroying habitats for birds and arthropods such as crabs, centipedes and millipedes.

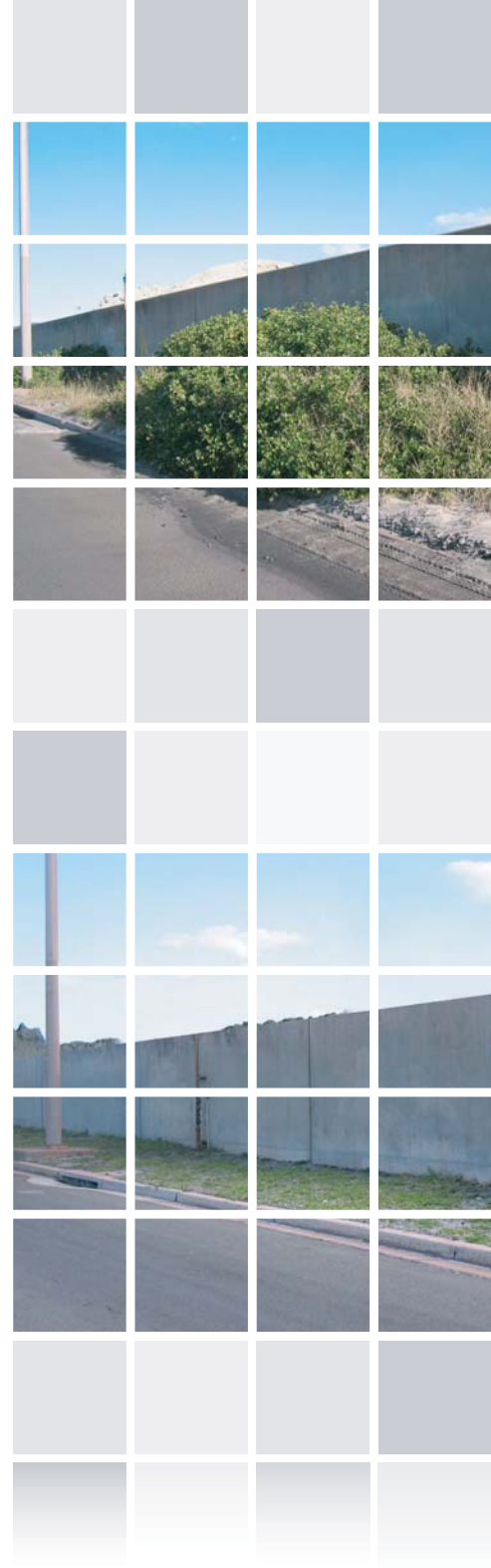
The Federal Government now considers Bitou Bush a "weed of national significance". Bitou Bush has become a major problem along the Illawarra coastline, including PKCT's 65-hectare site. However, Terminal staff are fighting back. Jason Rosewarn, who is leading the Bitou Bush project, says has completed Stage 1 of the fight against Bitou Bush, and is now planning Stage 2.

"Stage 1 involved targeting the Bitou Bush at 11 locations around the site," Mr Rosewarn said. "But we didn't adopt the traditional method of simply spraying the bushes, because that doesn't kill the seeds. Instead we removed the bushes and their root systems.

"Although this initial program was very labour intensive it was very successful and has now allowed us to introduce an effective, low cost spraying program that captures the Bitou Bush before it matures and reaches the stage of flowering."

Mr Rosewarn said Stage 1 program had taken four months to complete at a cost of \$35,000. Now he is planning Stage 2, which involves tackling infestations in more remote locations around the site.

"We have dealt with the more visible areas along the roads and in the coal stockpiles, but we still have some major infestations on the site that need to be dealt with," he said. "And we need to work closely with our neighbours to make this a joint effort. Unfortunately you can't completely eradicate Bitou Bush in isolation, because if it is growing across the fence it will find its way back pretty quickly with one mature plant able to produce up to 50,000 seeds per year."



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